District roundup

JESSORE

Hijacking only 150 yards away from thana

Dec 11: Two incidents of hijacking took place in the town Saturday in which miscreants snatched cash and valuables worth Taka one lakh from traders, reports UNB.

Police said, a group of hoodlums robbed two leather traders of Taka 50,000 at RN Road at about 6 am by halting their rickshaw at gun-point.

Only half an hour later, another gang of 10 miscreants equipped with firearms raided Alamin Cloth Store on the same road, about 150 yards from the *thana*, blasted several bombs and decamped with cash and valuables worth about Taka 50,000.

Local people said this was the seventh hijacking in three days.

BARGUNA

172 pry schools yet to get recognition

Dec 11: About 172 non-government primary schools in five *thanas* of the district have been facing manifold problems causing serious setback to basic education, says UNB.

Local people said, after long ten years of normal functioning of these schools in Amtali, Patharghata, Bamna, Betagi and *sadar thanas* are yet to be recognised by the government.

About 30,000 students have been studying in these schools but the teachers are not getting their salary regularly.

Besides, students of these schools are also facing problems due to shortages of furniture, blackboards and other necessary appliances.

Local leaders said if the government fails to accord recognition and a provide necessary financial assistance immediately many such schools will naturally face death.

They urged the government to look into the matter and take necessary steps.

JAMALPUR

Businessmen suffer due to illegal shed occupation

Dec 11: Illegal occupation of a government shed at Nandina *bazar* in the district by some people has been causing suffering to the local businessmen, says UNB.

Chairman of Ranagacha union, who is also the member of the *bazar* committee alleged that two influential men of the area occupied a shed allocated for the shoe sellers and set up hotels there. Local government Engineering Bureau constructed four sheds at the *bazar* a few years back.

Wastes and garbages dumped from the hotels in the centre of the *bazar* emits bad odour polluting the over all environment. During *hat* days it is difficult for the people to move about.

The chairman said, after repeated complaints to the authorities no step has yet been taken to evict them.

Local people urged the authority to evict the hotels from the centre point of the *hat* and transfer the shed to the shoe businessmen.

FENI

More Kuwaiti pallies soon

Dec 11: Awqaf and Religious Affairs Minister of Kuwait Jama An Faleh-Al-Azmi Sunday laid the foundation-stone of the 'Kuwait Palli' at Champaknagar village in Chhagalnaiya *thana*, reports UNB.

The Kuwaiti Minister thanked Bangladeshi people for their cooperation during the time of Iraqi aggression in Kuwait, and said "relations between the two countries will strengthen further with the establishment of the Palli."

He was accompanied by an eight-member delegation, including, Yusuf Al Seji, Chairman of the Kuwait Relief Committee, and Abdul Kader, Representative of the Zakat House.

Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Omar Farooq and Deputy Commissioner of Feni Iftekhar Ahmed were present on the occasion.

Construction of the model village will start January 1, and is expected to be completed by January 1, 1995.

The Kuwaiti government has decided to build four more 'Kuwait Pallies' at a cost of 1.10 lakh US dollar each in Feni, Bagerhat, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts for rehabilitating the poor and homeless.

They will also distribute cash to the residents of the Pallies for buying cattle and poultry.

SIRAJGANJ

17 injured in groups clash

Dec 11: At least 17 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups at Menchuabazar in the town Saturday, reports UNB.

Of the injured, Sangram (20) Mahbub (18) and Nazrul (21) were admitted to Sirajganj sadar hospital with head injuries.

Police and witnesses said the clash ensued when Mahbub of Darnapatty was assaulted by Nazrul and Sangram of Gosala area over a trifle matter.

Following the incident, a group of youths of Gosala area stormed the Sechubazar with lethal weapons creating panic among the people there.

Police rushed to the scene and had brought the situation under control.

BARISAL

3 arrested on charge of murder

Dec 11: Police recently arrested three young men from a suburb on charge of their involvement in the killing of Jagua UP Chairman Saidul Alam, says UNB.

Kotwali police in a raid on the suburban Ruptoli arrested Khalilur Rahman, Haider Ali Khan and Humayun.

They also recovered two pipeguns and five daggers from the house of Khalilur Rahman.

The Chairman of Jagua in the *sadar thana* was attacked and killed by a gang of armed miscreants Wednesday evening.

COMILLA

Contraband goods worth Tk 23.13 lakh seized

Dec 11: Comilla Task Force with the help of BDR personnel seized contrabands worth about Taka 23.13 lakh from Daudkandi ferry ghat and arrested a young man recently, reports UNB.

Following a tip-off police raided the *ghat* and seized a huge quantity of foreign cigarettes, Indian sarees, Phensidyl syrups, toiletries and luxury items, official sources said.

The goods have been handed over to Daudkandi police.

A case has been filed.

SATKHIRA

3 houses gutted

Dec 11: Three dwelling houses were gutted and three cows roasted alive in a devastating fire at Natoreber in Kaligonj *thana* on Tuesday night, says UNB.

The fire engulfed the three houses of Abbas Mollah and the cause of fire could not be ascertained. However, it is suspected that some miscreants might have set fire due to enmity.

Local people after frantic efforts brought the fire under control.

A case was filed with Kaligonj police.

PABNA

Toll collectors cut tendon of two businessmen

Dec 11 : Two businessmen were seriously injured when a gang of toll collectors cut their tendon when they denied to pay toll here in the town (Wednesday), reports UNB.

The armed gang beat up Md Murad (32), owner of Majnu Repairing Workshop and his brother Humayun at Kadamtola in the town, and cut the tendon of their legs as they denied to pay a toll of Taka 5,000.

They also exploded four to five crackers during the attack that created panic in the area.

Murad and Humayun were admitted to the *sadar* Hospital. A case was filed with *sadar* police.

FARIDPUR

One killed in road mishap

Dec 11 : A young boy was allegedly killed in a road accident recently in the town, says BSS.

According to Faridpur general hospital source, Mehedi Hassan aged eighteen, a student of Government Rajendra College was hit by a truck in Goalchamat area of the town while he was riding a bicycle.

He was brought to hospital in a critical condition where he succumbed to injury.

Local student brought out a procession protesting the death of the student and demanded punishment to the driver of the truck.

COMILLA : The gymnasium of Comilla Victoria University College has been lying unused for a long time for want of necessary equipment. — Star photo

Diarrhoea kills 61, attacks 800 in Madaripur, Rangpur

From Our Correspondent

MADARIPUR, Dec 11: Diarrhoea claimed 53, lives and attacked over five thousand in four *thanas* of the district.

Unofficial sources, however, said, 65 people died and more than seven thousand were attacked by the disease during the same period.

Official sources said, a total of 81 medical teams with 13 doctors has been working in the affected areas.

But local people complained that medical teams are not available in rural affected areas under Kalkini *thana*.

UNB from Rangpur says: Diarrhoea claimed eight more lives including three children in Paikgacha *thana* and attacked at least 300 others during the last three days, unofficial sources said Thursday.

The dead were identified as Shahida (9), Akbar (35), Momena Begum (29), Alamgir Hossain (25), Abu Hye (16), Rokeya (20) Ishaque (20) and an unidentified baby in Baikpur Union of the *thana*, family sources said.

Civil Surgeon however, denied the report.

Crisis of pure drinking water and adulterated food were the main causes for wide spread of the disease, local people said.

The faulty drainage system at Madaripur town is causing inconveniences to the dwellers. Most of the drains are *kutcha* and the old drains have developed cracks and holes. The drains remain filled with garbages and stagnant water most of the time.

The tax payers informed that water remains stagnant on both sides of the main roads. Most of the roads, including Puran Bazar Road, Karachi Bidi (Shaheed Chand Mia road) road, Head Post Office road, Nutan Bazar fish market and the low-lying areas remain under water.

Lack of adequate number of street lights in *pourashava* areas at the town is also causing much inconveniences to the inhabitants after sun set.

According to sources, most of the lightposts have no bulbs which create problems to the pedestrians as well as traffic.

Most of the time, the town plunges into darkness after sunset due to frequent power failure.

Gay girls

Floating gay girls have been creating problems to the public at the town.

The gay girls move about freely even in the day time. Sometimes they demonstrate ugly postures to draw the attention of the passersby. Mostly youngsters become the victim which has eaused concern among the guardians.

Office bearers

The election of Madaripur Zila Ayinzibee (Advocate) Samity was held recently.

Muzibur Rahman Khan and Fazlul Hoque were elected president and secretary respectively of the samity.

The other elected office bearer were: Mazharul Anwar, vice president, Samvunath Payoe-vice president, Suzit Chatarji-assistant secretary, Habibur Rahman-assistant secretary, Shahabuddin Miah-assistant secretary and Abdul Hai Howlader-treasurer.

RCS office bearers

The election of Red Cresent Society, Madaripur District Unit was held recently.

Sayed Sirazul Hoque and Sarwar Alam were elected vice-chairman and secretary respectively.

The other elected members were: Kazi Abul Bashar, Md Enamul Hoque Shaheen, Md Emdad Hossain Mintu, Md Jahander Ali Jahan and Kazi Ali Hossain.

Fund needed for renovation of 500-yr-old Khozar Masjid

by R K Goswami

MOULVIBAZAR, Dec 11: Kamala-Ranir Dighi, Chhaychhiri Dighi, Khojar Masjid (Mosque of Khoja) and the ruins of palace of the kings of Barshijura speak silently but impressively of the fact that Moulvibazar had a glorious past some day.

The 500-year-old "Khojar Masjid" is an historical object of pride and admiration for the people of Moulvibazar. It is located in the village of 'Goegarh' under Mustafapur UP of Moulvibazar Sadar thana. Besides being a house of prayer it also served as a boundary post for the sultans of Bengal.

A stone inscription in the mosque says, 'Khojar Masjid' was built during the reign of Shamsuddin Yousuf Shah, son of Barbak Shah who was one of the heirs to Sultan Shamsuddin Ilias Shah, the famous sultan of Bengal.

What is now greater Sylhet was once a part of Pragjyotish or Kamrup. The sultan of Bengal annexed this before the Mughuls came to India. Shamsuddin Yousuf Shah was appointed as the administrator of the Sylhet region by his father Sultan Barbak Shah. Yousuf Shah set up one of his army camps in the village of 'Goegarh'. During his long stay here, he constructed a fort and a mosque rich in decorations of the sultani period. This mosque has long been known as 'Khojar Masjid' without any inkling as to who this 'Khoja' was.

Well into the Mughul times Shah Shuja, son of Emperor Shahjahan, was appointed the administrator of this region. Shuja decided to carry on with the camp at 'Goegarh'. Accordingly he excavated a pond popularly known as 'Khojar Dighi' on ten acres of land in front of the existing mosque and the fort.

Later, when a fratricidal conflict developed among the Mughal princes Shah Shuja fled to Arakan where he was killed by an enemy. The village of Goegarh declined and was forgotten. The fort and the mosque lay uncared for about 300 years.

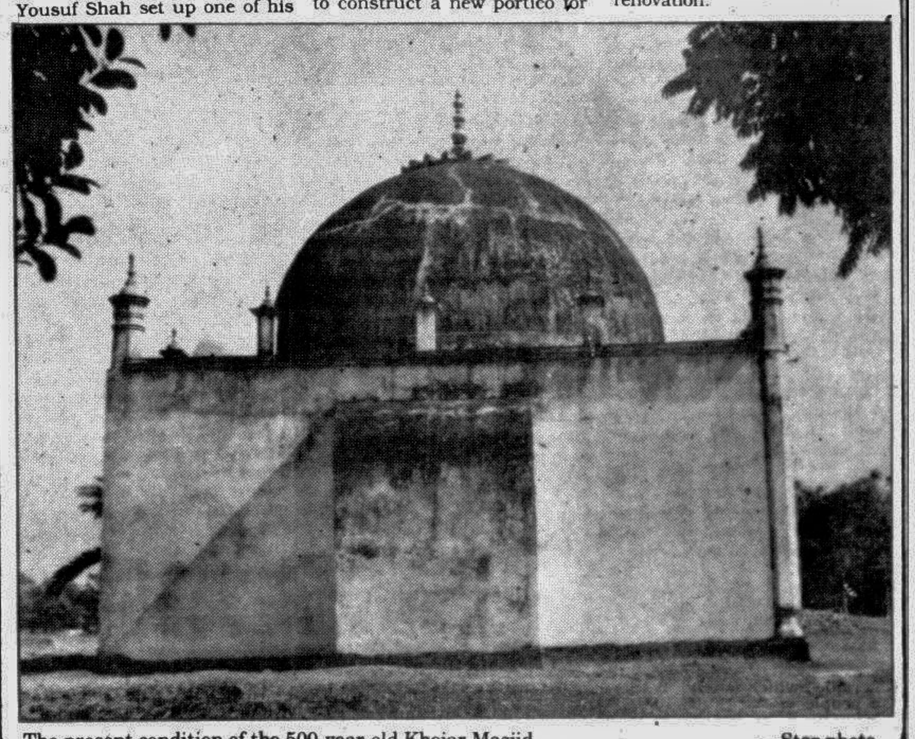
At the beginning of the present century, human habitation started around 'Khojar Masid' and in 1937 it was renovated.

In 1988, the portico of the mosque was damaged. People of the locality, quite ignorant of the value of antiquity, decided to construct a new portico for the mosque. Accordingly they collected huge sums from different sources, including Taka 35 thousand from the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Reconstruction work was undertaken in a manner not honouring the original architecture of the monument.

Local elite and educated people then moved the authorities of the National Museum at Dhaka for proper preservation of the mosque as a hallmark of Sultani architecture. The reconstruction was ordered to be stopped. The then director general of the national museum Dr Enamul Haque visited "Khojar Masid" and assured the people that necessary steps would be taken for the preservation of the mosque. But nothing tangible has come from his pledges.

The walls and domes of the mosque have been affected by moisture resulting in cracks appearing all over its body. It is quite risky now to say prayers in the mosque. Local experts are of the view that the mosque requires an amount of over one lakh taka at the moment for its repair works as well as renovation.



The present condition of the 500-year-old Khojar Masjid. — Star photo

Embankment lying incomplete for 23 yrs, farming uncertain

From Our Correspondent

HABIGANJ, Dec 11: Due to indifference of the Water Development Board (WDB), about 15000 acres of boro land many remain uncultivated in three *thanas* of the district during the current season.

It is learnt that an embankment project along the river Khowai and other projects were taken up by WDB in the year 1971-72 at an estimated cost of Taka 39 crore.

Out of the total, only 84-kilometer of embankment have been constructed so far in a period of 23 years. The remaining 30 km of embankment is yet to be reconstructed.

As a result, flood water submerges both the banks of river Khowai and inundates standing crops on about 30,000 acres every year.

This has become a regular feature and consequently the farmers are reluctant to cultivate their land.

It is apprehended that about 15000 acres of land may remain uncultivated resulting in loss of about six lakh *maunds* of paddy.

Local people have urged the authority concerned to take immediate steps to complete the construction work of the embankment.

Huge quantities of stolen forest wood have been recovered by a forest officer from Madabpur area of the district recently.

It is learnt from Ragunandan Forest Department source that, Mahbubul Hussain, a forest officer conducted a raid near Madabpur and recovered the stolen segun and karai wood of Ragunandan forest worth about Taka 30 thousand.

In another raid BDR *jowans* of Balla Headquarters seized 70 pieces of smuggled Indian wood at Chunerughat recently.

It is learnt that acting on a secret information, the BDR personnel conducted a raid at Dudpathil under Chunerughat *thana* and seized 10 vans which were loaded with Indian smuggled segun wood.

The alleged seized vans were taken to BDR camp but later on they were released.

UNB adds: Three development projects under Public Works Department (PWD) costing Taka 15 crore are going on in full swing.

The projects are construction of a 100-bed modern hospital, DC collectorate building and construction of a police barak.

Officials sources said 80 per cent works of the hospital building have already been completed. The construction of the DC Collectorate Building are also progressing very fast, they added.

Besides, the police barak which housing a reserve office, magazine building, four unit staff quarter, is on progress.

The PWD has also undertaken a project at a cost of Taka about 2 crore for the construction of Habiganj judge court building. The construction work is expected to begin soon.

Housewife beaten to death

MANIKGANJ, Dec 11: A young housewife of Maguril village in Shibalaya *thana* was allegedly beaten to death by her husband, police said Thursday, reports UNB.

Family sources said Sajeya Begum (18), wife of Shajahan (30) was leading an unhappy conjugal life since her marriage a year back. Shahjahan used to torture her casting aspersion on her character.

On the fateful midnight on November 30, Shahjahan picked up a quarrel with her on a trifling matter and started beating her mercilessly causing her instantaneous death.

SYLHET: The staff of Drug and Narcotics Department recently seized 85 bottles of Indian wine and two kilograms of ganga from Tukerbazar area of sadar thana. — Star photo

Illegal sale of lottery tickets

BARGUNA, Dec 11 : Illegal sale of lucky coupon and lottery tickets has been going on openly in almost all the villages of district during last few months, local people said, reports UNB.

A group of people engaged in this business are exploiting the innocent villagers and poor people, it is alleged.

It is learnt that more than 50 groups of coupon sellers are active in different villages of Amtali, Bamna, Patharghata, Betagi and *sadar thanas*.

Some dishonest people under the patronisation of corrupt union council members and local influentials, have been dealing with this lucky coupon business alluring the innocent people, particularly the youths of attractive prizes including colour television, V C P Set, cassette players etc.

Students are the main customers who are collecting money from their guardians under compelling situations to buy these lucky coupons and lottery tickets, the sources said.

Woman awarded life-term for murder

DINAJPUR, Dec 11 : A women was sentenced to life imprisonment for killing second wife of her husband, court sources said here Thursday, reports UNB.

The case, in brief, was that Rehana Khatun of village Shalti Muradpur in Nawabganj *thana*, in absence of her husband Sekendar Ali, murdered the second wife by punching on the neck on Oct 4, 1992. Later she hanged the victim to prove her innocence.

A case has been filed and police after investigation submitted charge sheet against Rehana.

After examining the records and witnesses the Additional District and Sessions Judge Rafiqul Islam awarded the punishment on November 30.

Another report adds: A man was sentenced to life term on December 1, for killing his wife.

According to the prosecution story, Selina Sultana (18) of Bhabanipur in Chirirbandar *thana* was beaten to death by her husband Abdul Latif on October 10, 1992. But the husband put poison in her mouth to prove that she committed suicide.

Workshop at BAU

"Plant more trees to protect environment"

MYMENSINGH, Dec 11: Speakers at a workshop on 'Agricultural Afforestation' at Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) urged all to plant trees to help protect the environment from its pollution, reports UNB.

The two-day workshop, organised by Graduate Training Institute (GTI), was concluded on Sunday, said a press release.

The country will be immensely benefited both economically and environmentally if its 12 crore people plant trees in their house premises, they observed.

Presided over by the GTI Director Mohammad Tajul Islam the inaugural session of the workshop was attended, among others, by Agriculture Faculty Dean Prof M Abdul Haque, Dr Zabed Ali Mirza and Prof Amir Hossain.

Eight topics have been discussed in the five sessions of the workshop.

Prof Dr Haque suggested to recast the agricultural management to check the environment pollution.

Among others, former Vice-Chancellor Dr Zahirul Haque Bhuiyan, Dr A Munsi, Dr Mohamman Azizul Haque, Dr A M Faruq, DR SM Altaf Hossain, Dr M Arshad Ali, Dr Mohammad Aminul Islam took part in the workshop.

Another report says: The three week-long higher training course on "Communication and technology transfer" organised by the Graduate Training Institute (GTI) was concluded on Saturday.

Vice Chancellor of Bangladesh Agriculture University Prof Shah Md Faruq distributed certificates among the trainees as chief guest on the concluding day.

Deputy Director of Indian Agriculture Research Council and eminent communication specialist Dr PN Mathur attended the function as special guest which was presided over by GTI Director Prof Dr Md Tajul Islam.

The V-C stressed the need for extending communication system in the field of agriculture and said the farmers as well as the nation would be benefitted through effective extension of communication and information system.

He also called for greater coordination between the farmers, researchers and agri extension workers.

Representatives from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Shri-Lanka participated the international training course which was financed by the government of Netherlands.

Another report adds: A week-long programmes began in the town Friday on the occasion of the Freedom Day of Mymensingh with due respect.

The programmes included discussions, Bijoy Mela and cultural functions.

Blacksmiths pass hard days

NATORE, Dec11: The blacksmiths of the district have been facing enormous problems due to lack of patronisation and price hike of essential inputs, reports UNB.

About 3,000 blacksmiths are passing their days in great hardship for quite a long time. They are not getting fair price of their products due to lack of marketing facilities and as a result they are forced to sell the same below the production cost.

Meanwhile, a large number of them have already deserted their age-old occupation and turned day labourers for the very survival, local people said.

Singra, Gurudaspur, Banpara, Bagatipara, Lalpur, Walla and many other areas of the district are mostly populated by the blacksmith community. These people are now facing great hardship to maintain their livelihood.

While taking to UNB, some blacksmiths told that the price of their products has gone down in the past few years while the prices inputs have increased manifold during the same period.

The blacksmiths are producing dao, axe, knife, kitchen knife and other essential agri-inputs which are being sold in the local markets. But now the situation has changed due price hike of necessary ingredients. They are reluctant to produce family tools as they are to sell these below the production cost.

The blacksmiths urged the government to provide them with short-term loans and necessary patronisation to continue their ancestral occupation.